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ABSTRACT

Employers' and unions' acceptance in attitude and practice of the equal capacity of women to function in the skilled trades and other apprentice-type jobs depends upon knowledge of facts, actual experience, and understanding of equal opportunity laws, according to the authors of the document, which offers to employers first steps to take to increase the employment of women in the skilled trades, steps to take to better utilize women workers once they have been hired, and steps unions can take to open the skilled trades to women. Advice is offered to women on accelerating their entry into skilled trades, and special programs now underway to help women enter the skilled trades are enumerated and briefly described. (AJ)

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STEPS TO OPENING THE SKILLED TRADES TO WOMEN

Manpower projections for the 1970's point to the skilled trades and apprentice-type jobs as an area of rapid employment increase. This area is also one in which women are greatly underrepresented, although many women have the necessary aptitudes and potential skills.

As a route out of the traditional "female" jobs--many of which are dead end and low paying--women are increasingly seeking entry into well-paying craft jobs which provide opportunities for advancement and job satisfaction. Legislation calling for equal employment opportunity and affirmative action to eliminate sex discrimination has opened many doors formerly closed to women workers.

Today, employers are seeking help in recruiting, training, and employing women for the skilled trades. This situation is reminiscent of the World War II production years when, according to a Bureau of the Census survey, 6.7 million women entered the labor force between December 1941 and March 1944. And of this number, 2.9 million were first time entrants in the occupational category of "craftsmen, foremen,1/ operatives, and nonfarm laborers."

Women proved they could perform well in such jobs as welders, machine operators, and shipfitters, and in a myriad of other industrial jobs. Some of the women were pioneers in new fields, while others came in when the initial attitudes and job skill requirements had been well established.

When the war ended, most of the women were gradually phased out of the skilled jobs. And for about a decade and a half after the war, their numbers were too few to be counted, in accordance with the usual Census methods. During the sixties, however, the number of women employed as craft workers increased by about 80 percent, rising from 277,140 in 1960 to 494,871 in 1970. Data for 1973 from the Current Population Survey, although not strictly comparable with data from the Decennial Census, suggest that the growth of women workers in skilled occupations has continued. In 1973, 561,000 women were employed as craft workers and they represented 4 percent of the total.

Another positive trend toward the fuller utilization of women in skilled jobs is reflected in vocational school enrollment data for

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1/ "Craftsmen, foremen" are now called "craft and kindred workers." The change was made in the modification of sex-stereotyped occupational titles in the Bureau of the Census occupational classification system. U.S. Office of Management and Budget, Statistical Reporter, October 1973, pp. 67-68.

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1972. In that year the number of women enrolled in technical programs was 33,006, up from 22,890 in 1966-67. The increase was even greater among women enrolled in trade and industrial training courses, rising from 155,808 in 1966-67 to 279,680 in 1972.

What are the first steps employers must take to increase the employment of women in the skilled trades?

- Know specifically the legal requirements for equal employment opportunity and affirmative action programs. Know what practices are discriminatory in effect, if not in principle.

- Examine your own prejudices--do the facts support them? Acknowledge if they don't.

- Assert and publicize a clear and firm policy statement on equal opportunity, including specific reference to opportunities for women. See that the statement receives continued attention at all management levels, and that it is brought to the attention of all agencies and organizations with which you do business.

- Educate management, supervisory personnel, and all workers toward a realistic appraisal and acceptance of women as workers.

- Modify the recruiting process. See that job postings are accessible to both men and women. Expand help-wanted advertising to include minority news media and women's interest media.

- Make certain that only valid job-related testing procedures are established for all jobs. Give special attention to language limitations of some minority women.

- See that job requirements are job related. Review all job descriptions for discriminatory qualifications.

- Select employees for training programs at all levels on the basis of ability without regard to sex. Analyze promotion procedures for discriminatory practices.

- Enlist the support of employed women, both union and non-union, to provide impetus for change in attitude toward training and work opportunities for all women. Ask them for suggestions on how to further the company's equal employment opportunity policy.

- Include nondiscrimination clauses in collective bargaining agreements; modify seniority provisions if they perpetuate separate lines of progression for women and men; eliminate sex discrimination in such areas as apprenticeship training and termination, layoff, and recall practices.

- Work with vocational schools to improve and increase related courses and to change attitudes toward training women for skilled trades.

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- Take a community leadership role in advocating women for industrial jobs.

- Develop systems to monitor and measure progress regularly. If results are not satisfactory, find out why and make necessary changes.

What can employers do to better utilize women workers once they have been hired?

- Give pre-job training at the entry level, with the objective of conditioning the new employee mentally and physically.

  --Give orientation to the world of work: attendance requirements, work clothing needs, remedial education to assist in taking tests and filling out forms, with special attention to language limitations of some women minorities.

  --Give orientation at job site: expose to noise, shift changes, rest and meal areas, health facilities.

  --Give instructions in the terminology, use, and care of tools. (Some individuals lack mechanical familiarity but have mechanical ability.)

  --Give necessary physical training to meet the demands of some jobs.

  --Sensitize both men and women as to interpersonal relations. Attitudes toward the work situation should be objective rather than personal. This should include deemphasizing personal feelings toward possible offensive language and actions.

  --Provide safety and health education.

- Modify and emphasize the training process for all inexperienced workers.

  --Train on production, if possible, but prior to pressures of production goals.

  --Train under conditions which approximate those of employment, including hazards.

  --Be sure that new women employees are not harrassed on the job.

  --Use audio-visual aids to supplement written material when lecturing.

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--Be sure related instruction courses are pertinent and that individual employees are aware of their importance.

--Give full explanations of work procedures and demonstrate repeatedly.

--Break jobs down to simplest components.

--Limit inexperienced employees to work in which they have been trained until they feel secure. (Apprehension due to insecurity is the biggest cause of fatigue--not the work itself.)

--Build self-assurance. Some women lack confidence in their ability to perform jobs traditionally reserved for men.

- o Provide supportive services.

--Have as a model for new women workers, if possible, a senior woman worker with a sense of responsibility toward them.

--Provide a counselor on site to help new workers deal with problems that cause absenteeism and turnover, such as: inadequate housing and transportation; unsatisfactory arrangements for care of children; lack of conditioning to meet the physical demands of the job; accumulative fatigue; too heavy load of outside duties; and unhappy working relationships.

--Provide child care facilities on site or advocate them as community services.

--Provide opportunity for group discussions of common problems.

What can unions do to open the skilled trades to women?

- o Encourage women union members to aspire to and prepare for skilled trades jobs and apprenticeship programs as a route out of low-paying clerical, service, and production jobs.
- o Insist that affirmative action plans for apprenticeship and other skilled trades training programs include women as well as minorities.
- o Include nondiscrimination clauses in collective bargaining agreements. Eliminate sex discrimination in such areas as apprenticeship training and termination, layoff, and recall practices.

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- o Examine seniority policies to see if they perpetuate patterns of discrimination. The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission can give technical assistance on how seniority policies can be made nondiscriminatory.

- o Be sure that new employees are not harrassed on the job.

- o See that women are utilized effectively in leadership roles, both as staff and elective officers.

What can women do to accelerate their entry into the skilled trades?

- o Think skilled trades--include these among your range of job possibilities.

- o Be aware of the laws and their enforcement provisions for equal opportunity in employment, education, and training.

- o Investigate the personal and financial rewards that accompany employment in a skilled trade.

- o Contact employers directly about the kinds of jobs women are holding. Express your interest and be aware of openings that occur. Learn the application procedures.

- o Inquire of individual women or organizations engaged in promoting new job opportunities for women--including local State Employment Security offices.

- o Indicate your willingness to try a job that uses your mechanical ability as well as your intelligence.

- o Once on the work site, realize that you may encounter difficulties in interpersonal relationships as you perform jobs in which few women are employed.

- o Don't give up in face of a few hardships if this is the job you want--and you know you can do it.

What special programs are underway to help women enter the skilled trades?

Several different approaches are being used to facilitate the entry of women into nontraditional jobs. Some examples are as follows:

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Better Jobs for Women--Denver, Colorado

This unique program was developed by the Bureau of Apprenticeship and Training of the U.S. Department of Labor, and is operated by the YWCA of Metropolitan Denver. The project places women into apprenticeship programs or other on-the-job training positions.

Since the program began in March 1971, 109 women have been placed in a variety of occupations such as carpenter, cement mason, electrician, operating engineer, painter, plumber, roofer, steel fabricator; also as business machine repairer, forklift operator, injection molder, mechanic, telephone installer, and tool and die maker.

Women in Apprenticeship--Madison, Wisconsin

The Division of Apprenticeship and Training of the Wisconsin Department of Industry, Labor, and Human Relations and the University of Wisconsin Extension conducted a 3-year (July 1970-June 1973) research and demonstration project on women in apprenticeship. The purpose of the project was to "isolate, analyze, and minimize barriers to the participation of women in the skilled trades." Although resistance to the employment of women in apprenticeship was clearly indicated, women were found employed as lithographer, camera operator, sign painter, television repairer, newspaper printer, meat cutter, second class engineer, and die maker.

One very tangible result of this project was the production of a color film on women in apprenticeable occupations, entitled "Never Underestimate the Power of a Woman." The film was produced by the University of Wisconsin and is available from the Wisconsin Employment Service.

WAGES (Women and Girls' Employment Enabling Service)--Memphis, Tennessee

Sponsored by the Memphis and Shelby County Health and Welfare Planning Council, this pilot project was established in June 1972 to develop new areas of employment for women. The project has developed a skills inventory of women with different kinds of abilities.

As a result of this project, women have received placements in maintenance repair, in the U.S. Postal Service as security guards, and in production work with certain companies which may lead to forklift operator and other skilled jobs.

Female Job Placement Program (FEJOP)--Chattanooga, Tennessee

This experimental project was started in the summer of 1971 to increase both the job options and the pay of disadvantaged women who were heads of households in the Model Cities neighborhood.

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With the help of FEJOP, women are psychologically motivated and physically conditioned to perform in jobs formerly thought of as men's. Women are earning good wages as forklift operator, spray painter, welder, bench press operator, metal plate polisher, and wood turning lathe operator.

Advocates for Women--San Francisco, California

This nonprofit organization is operating the first apprenticeship outreach program for women on the West Coast. The intent of the program is to place women in such apprenticeship jobs as carpenter, electrician, machinist, and dental technician. By the time the contract was effective in December 1973, Advocates already had on file the names of women interested in entering apprentice occupations.

Apprenticeship Outreach Program for Women

In April 1974 the Manpower Administration amended three of its apprenticeship outreach contracts to provide new opportunities for women. The Apprenticeship Outreach Program, since its inception in 1964, generally has been directed toward recruiting minority men into apprentice trades. The expanded program places special emphasis on recruiting young women, who will be given the necessary counseling and tutoring to prepare them to enter all apprenticeable occupations.

Three organizations will operate pilot projects in six selected cities. The National Urban League will expand its programs in Atlanta, Chicago, and Los Angeles. The Mexican-American Foundation will conduct a second outreach program in Los Angeles. The Recruitment and Training Program, Inc., formerly the Workers Defense League of the A. Philip Randolph Foundation, will expand its programs in Boston, Cleveland, and New York.

The Women's Bureau and other agencies of the Labor Department, in collaboration with the three organizations, are seeking the cooperation of the National Alliance of Businessmen, the Central Labor Council, building and construction trades councils, employer associations, women's organizations, local Job Corps centers, the mayor of each city, community groups, and local, State, and Federal agencies.

Other Programs

A number of other organizations are also working to increase the number of skilled jobs and to provide training opportunities for girls and women.

- The National Association of Women in Construction (NAWIC) is now offering scholarships to students (girls and boys) who plan to enter a field of study directly related to the construction industry.

- Women in Technical Trades and Professions, Berkeley, California, was formed early in 1970 by feminists concerned with opening blue-collar job opportunities to women.

- Lady Carpenter Institute of Building and Home Improvement, Inc., in New York City, has graduated more than 220 women of all ethnic backgrounds and ages. The Institute serves as a bridge between experience already gained at home and professional job placement in carpentry and cabinetmaking by affording educational opportunities for development of skills and competence.

- Project Repair in San Diego, California, began a pilot program in the summer of 1973 to develop skills competency for young women 14 to 18 years of age in home repair related markets such as appliance and TV repair.

- The American Association of Women Truck Drivers, Charter Oak, California, was formed about 2 years ago to assist in or to get training for self-supporting women desiring employment as truck drivers and to eliminate discrimination against them on the basis of sex.

In restating their hiring policies to allow jobs to be filled without regard to sex, companies such as AT&T, Pacific Telephone, General Electric, Chrysler Corporation, Bethlehem Steel, and others are increasing their placements of women into the skilled trades.

For several years women have been accepted into a variety of apprenticeable jobs in the U.S. Armed Services, the National Aeronautics and Space Administration, and a few other Federal agencies.

In Conclusion

Employers' and unions' acceptance in attitude and practice of the equal capacity of women to function in the skilled trades and other apprentice-type jobs depends upon knowledge of facts, actual experience, and understanding of equal employment opportunity laws.

Women now have the option to enter such jobs and to resist adverse social pressures and discriminatory practices which have hindered them in the past. Again, knowledge of facts, actual experience, and understanding of equal employment opportunity laws furnish support to their integrated participation in the Nation's work force.

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